

Legislative News



February 26, 2010

House Higher Education Gives First-Round Approval to Two Proposals

New Higher Education Bills:

[HB 2227 Lampe](#) (D-Springfield)
Institutes procedures for public employee collective bargaining.

[SB 963 Shoemyer](#) (D-Clarence)
Transfers the administration of the Minority and Underrepresented Environmental Literacy Program from the Department of Natural Resources to the Department of Higher Education.

[SB 987 Stouffer](#) (R-Napton)
Increases the statutory award amount for research projects funded by the University of Missouri Board of Curators.

[SCR 31 Pearce](#) (R-Warrensburg)
Encourages students and faculty to promote international education at Missouri colleges and universities.

The [House Higher Education Committee](#) met in executive session to vote on two bills on Tuesday of this week. The committee voted on [Representative Mike Thomson's HB 1473](#), which changes the Access Missouri GPA requirement for certain students. HB 1473 would change the grade point average required for some Access Missouri students to receive renewal awards. Current law requires students to maintain a 2.5 GPA in order to get a renewal award for Access Missouri.

The committee voted do pass on a committee substitute.

The committee also voted do pass on a committee substitute version of [Representative Rob Schaaf's HB 1504](#). This bill would change the eligibility criteria for the Missouri Returning Heroes Education Act to allow veterans who served in armed combat at any time – not just after September 11, 2001 – to receive the discounted tuition. It would also allow veterans who meet the college or university's residency requirements at the time they enroll to receive the benefit, regardless of whether they were Missouri residents at the time they entered the service. Although these are significant changes, their impact will be reduced by the requirement that veterans must use the benefit within 10 years of being discharged from the service.

The original version of HB 1504 also included language requiring homeschooled students to be treated the same as non-homeschooled students for purposes of financial aid eligibility. That language is not in the committee substitute that will move forward.

Update on Access Missouri Award Amounts

Access Missouri award amounts to individuals attending private versus public educational institutions continued to be a hot topic in the capitol this week. On Wednesday, the [Senate Education Committee](#) met to discuss [SB 784](#), filed by Senators [Kurt Schaefer](#) and [David Pearce](#), which would equalize award amounts for students at public and private institutions. After brief discussion on the bill, the commit-

tee voted do pass with a 6-3 vote. On the House side, a public hearing of [Representative Gayle Kingery's HB 1812](#), which is nearly identical to SB 784, will be heard in the [House Higher Education Committee](#) on Tuesday, March 2 at 8:00 a.m. in HR6.



LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Senate Education Focuses on Higher Education



The [Senate Education Committee](#) heard testimony about four higher education bills on Wednesday of this week. Topics covered included the DREAM Act, Bright Flight, scholarships for students who graduate from high school early, and a technical detail related to the Higher Education Student Funding Act.

[Senator Jolie Justus' SB 783](#) includes provisions similar to the DREAM Act passed by several other states – including Kansas, Illinois, and Nebraska – and discussed for several years at the federal level. It would allow certain aliens to receive in-state tuition at colleges and universities. In order to qualify for the benefit, a student would have to have lived with her or her parent/guardian while attending a Missouri high school, graduated from high school or gotten a GED, attended a Missouri high school for at least 2 years before graduating or receiving a GED, and entered the U.S. before

the enactment of the DREAM Act. In addition, students who are not U.S. citizens or permanent residents have to agree that they will apply to become permanent residents at the earliest opportunity.

Senator Justus told the committee that she sees this bill as a way to keep students engaged at the high school level. She said that high school guidance counselors have told her how hard it is to keep students in school and working hard when they believe that their prospects of getting into college and gaining employment after high school graduation are very limited. Committee members had no questions for Senator Justus. Several international students who were present for the hearing indicated their support for the bill by a show of hands.

[Senator David Pearce's SB 733](#) proposes a minor change to the [Bright Flight program](#). Current state law allows students who enter the military to defer Bright Flight awards for up to 27 months. This no longer reflects the reality of military service – most military members today serve much longer terms than 27 months. SB 733 extends the deferral period for students who enter the military. For such students, the deferral period extends for however long they are in the military, plus six months.

[MDHE](#) staff and a representative from a veterans' organization testified in favor of the bill. Senators had few questions, but [Senator Scott Rupp](#) indicated that this bill may become a vehicle for broader Bright

Flight changes.

The committee also discussed [Senator Scott Rupp's SB 907](#), which would create a scholarship program for students who graduate from high school in three years or less. The scholarship would be for a student's first year of college, and it would be in an amount equal to 80% of the state aid that would have been attributable to that student had the student stayed in high school for a fourth year. The school district from which the student graduated would also receive 20% of that amount.

[MDHE](#) staff testified in favor of the bill. Committee members had questions about the fiscal impact of the proposal, both on state general revenue and on individual school districts.

Finally, the committee heard [Senator Frank Barnitz's SB 939](#), which would change the way the [MDHE](#) calculates inflation for the Higher Education Student Funding Act (commonly referred to as the "tuition cap" language enacted after the passage of [SB 389](#) (2007)). Current law compares the Consumer Price Index (CPI) on January 1 of the current year with January 1 of the previous year. This bill would require that the percentage change in the annual average of the CPI would be used instead. CPI is used in determining the amount that institutions can raise tuition without potentially being fined by the CBHE.

Upcoming Events

Next week is Math, Engineering, Science and Technology Week at the Capitol. Several events are planned to help bring attention to the need to educate more Missourians in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields.

International Education Day

Nearly 300 college students from 57 countries representing 19 Missouri higher education institutions came to the Missouri Capitol to celebrate International Education Day on Wednesday, February 24. The event was coordinated by the Study Missouri Consortium and the [MDHE](#). Study Missouri is a consortium of 25 Missouri colleges and universities from all higher education sectors.

Study Missouri developed from a grassroots effort to promote Missouri as a destination for international students and faculty, to develop awareness of study abroad opportunities to Missouri students, to advance cultural competencies in higher education curricula, and to provide a network for professional development to Missouri global education faculty and professionals.

International Day at the Capitol was sponsored in part by [Senator David Pearce](#) and [Representative Denny Hoskins](#). Senator Pearce and Representative Hoskins have introduced concurrent resolutions ([HCR 24](#) and [SCR 31](#)) to recognize international education as an essential component of Missouri's future.

While visiting the Capitol, the students observed legislative sessions, visited with lawmakers representing the districts in which they study, and listened to guest speakers from the MDHE and the [Department of Economic Development](#). The students were also introduced on the floor of both chambers and observed the legislative process and deliberation. This was a eye-opening experience for many of those students that come to Missouri from countries where the legislative process is entirely closed off to the public.

Currently Missouri has 11,285 international students attending colleges and universities and ranks 17th in the nation. According to a survey conducted by Study Missouri, students from other countries are attracted to Missouri by the state's friendly atmosphere, academic offerings, safe environment, and low cost of living. The National Association of International Educators has estimated that international students contribute an estimated \$270.9 million to Missouri's economy each year.

Access Missouri Workgroup Announced

In response to the recent debate over Access Missouri award amounts for private and public institutions, [MDHE](#) commissioner [Dr. Robert Stein](#) has announced the creation of a workgroup comprised of representatives from public and private institutions to discuss the current Access Missouri program and potential alternatives its current award structure. For the group, Dr. Stein has invited 10 representatives from the educational institutions around the state to participate. The workgroup is expected to meet within the next two to three weeks to begin discussions.

New Member Named to MSSU Board of Governors

This week [Governor Jay Nixon](#) appointed Lynn M. Ewing III, the prosecuting attorney of Vernon County, to the [Missouri Southern State University Board of Governors](#). This appointment has now been referred to the [Senate Gubernatorial Appointments Committee](#) for review.



LEGISLATIVE NEWS

New Filing Record Set

Filing for the August 3 primary election opened Tuesday. This year, a record 417 individuals filed candidacy papers for statewide offices on the first day of filing, topping the previous record of 386 candidates set in 2002. While Missouri's candidacy filing period runs through March 30, typically half the candi-

dates file on the first day. This year, 163 house seats, 17 senate seats, nine U.S. House seats and one U.S. Senate seat are up for reelection statewide. Winners of the August 3 primary will face off in the November general election. More information on who filed can be found on the [Secretary of State's website](#).



New Student Board Members

Two student board members were confirmed by the Senate late last week. Ashley Hoyer was confirmed as the student representative for the [Missouri State University Board of Governors](#) and Laura Confer was named student representative for the [University of Missouri Board of Curators](#).

Upcoming Committee Meetings

The [House Higher Education Committee](#) will meet Tuesday, March 2 at 8:00 a.m. in HR 6. The committee will hear the following bills:

[Rep. Gale Kingery's HB 1812](#), which changes the amounts of financial assistance awards from the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program.

[Rep. Denny Hoskins's HCR 24](#), which encourages students and faculty to promote international education at Missouri colleges and universities.

The [Senate Education Committee](#) will meet Wednesday, March 3 at 3:00 p.m. in the Senate Lounge. The committee will hear the following bills:

[Sen. David Pearce's SB 936](#), which establishes the Missouri Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Initiative within the Department of Higher Education.

[Sen. Bill Stouffer's SB 987](#), which increases the statutory award amount for research projects funded by the University of Missouri Board of Curators.